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Farm Broadcasters Letter



Letter No. 2195

January 10, 1985

GIT ALONG, GATT!

The U.S. notified the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) that it was withdrawing from GATT's International Dairy Arrangement (IDA) in 60 days, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. One of the primary objectives of the IDA is to set minimum export prices for butter and other basic dairy products by participating countries. The European Community authorized a large sale of surplus butter to the Soviet at prices well below GATT minimum levels. U.S. officials concluded that the EC's sale to the Soviets rendered the IDA meaningless.

SALES TO USSR

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, sales of wheat and corn to the USSR for delivery during the second year of the Long Term Grain Supply Agreement, which began Oct. 1, 1984, now total 13,607,500 tons, of which wheat is 3,350,700 tons, and corn is 10,256,800.

THE FLU FLIES AGAIN

Avian influenza has been detected in chickens from a Maryland farm, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The birds were seized by District of Columbia police after a representative of the owner attempted to sell live birds from a truck without a license. The birds included chickens, ducks, pigeons, Guinea hens, chukars and doves. Although the birds were traced only to backyard operations, the USDA urged all poultry producers to observe strict bio-security measures to protect their flocks.

BORDER CLOSED TO FRUIT FLIES

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has closed the U.S. border indefinitely to Mexican tangerines, oranges and grapefruit, after finding Mexican fruit fly larvae in significant numbers of citrus shipments presented for imports. The ban will remain in effect until larval levels are reduced.

LOTS OF COTTON

Brazil's 1984/85 cotton crop is unofficially estimated at 3.72 million bales, up 44 pct. from last season's revised estimate of 2.58 million, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Pakistan's cotton output in 1984/85 is unofficially estimated at 3.85 million bales, 76 pct. above last season's crop of 2.19 million. India's 1984/85 cotton crop is unofficially estimated at 6.48 million bales, 10 pct. above last year's crop.

OATS IN RELEASE STATUS

Oats in the farmer-owned grain reserve will remain in release status through Jan. 31, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. On Jan. 2, the adjusted price for oats was \$1.69 per bushel, 4 cents above the release level of \$1.65 for reserve oats. Effective Jan. 1, storage payments stopped and interest began to accrue for oats in the reserve for more than one year.

FIRMS
SUSPENDED

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has suspended two California poultry firms from participating in the Federal school lunch program because of alleged false representation that their product met Federal school lunch program specifications, according to Sec'y of Agriculture John Block. The suspended firms are Cal-Pacific Poultry Inc., Pomona, Calif., where the alleged violations occurred, and Beaumont Poultry, Inc., Beaumont, Calif., which is under the same management. The alleged violations relate to quality levels and not product safety.

IMPROVED
OUTLOOK AND
SITUATION

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is altering its outlook and situation reports series. Agricultural Outlook, issued 11 times each year, will focus on short term analysis of emerging conditions affecting commodities, including weather, exports, government programs, prices and production costs. The traditional Economic Research Service quarterly outlook and situation reports will be changed to twice annually and supported by yearbooks. This series covers cotton and wool, dairy, feed, fruit, oil crops, sugar and sweeteners, tobacco, vegetables, wheat and inputs. The series on livestock and poultry will be reduced from six to four times per year; the annual statistical bulletin on this topic will be continued.

WATCH FOR
THE
MAILMAN

Twenty-four thousand farmers and ranchers are getting letters this January from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The letters are part of the 1984 Farms Costs and Returns Survey, asking farmers about their 1984 farm production expenses, debts and assets, income, production practices, and costs of production for selected commodities. In the 6 or 7 weeks that follow, someone will be knocking on their doors, requesting an hour of their time. The survey results will help farm analysts, lawmakers, producer groups, and the farm input industries understand the needs and problems within the farm sector.

LEADERS
IN SUGAR

Who are the leading actors in world sugar trade? According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the leading producer is Brazil, producing nearly $9\frac{1}{2}$ million metric tons in the 1983/84 marketing year. Second was the USSR with nearly $8\frac{3}{4}$ million. The U.S. was fifth, with just over 5 million metric tons. The leading sugar exporter was Cuba with 7 million metric tons. Second was France, $3\frac{1}{4}$ million. As for sugar importers, the USSR was the leader at $5\frac{1}{2}$ million metric tons. The U.S. was second with nearly 3 million.

GRAZING FEES
LOWERED

The grazing fee on national forests and grasslands will be \$1.35 per animal month, two cents less than in 1984, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture report. These fees will be on national forests and grasslands in Idaho and Oregon, and on national forests in Arizona, California, Colorado, Montana, Nevada, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Utah, Washington and Wyoming. The grazing value will be \$2.50 per animal month, 12 cents less than in 1984, for national grasslands in Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas and Wyoming. Twenty-five percent of grazing fees are returned to counties to be used for public schools and roads. The remainder goes to the U.S. Treasury.

FROM OUR
TELEVISION
SERVICE

"Agricultural Finance"...USDA economist Ron Meekhof focuses on the economic outlook for the farm sector in 1985, including farm debt and loan defaults and farm real estate values. Vic Powell interviews. (291)

"Satellites and Ethiopean Famine"...USDA analyst Ellen Wolaner talks about the use of satellites and remote sensing techniques to look at the drought situation in Africa. DeBoria Janifer interviews. (292)

"U.S. Weather Update."...USDA chief meteorologist Dr. Norton Strommen describes the current weather outlook for the coming spring, and what it will mean for farmers in terms of planting options. Jim Johnson interviews. (293)

"Wool and Lamb Industry"...USDA economist Keith Collins comments on the decline of the wool and lamb industry and factors contributing to this decline. Lynn Wyvill interviews. (294)

"Ridge Tillage"...Gary Beaumont, Univ. of Illinois Cooperative Extension Service, talks with agricultural engineers John Siemens and John Hummel about the advantages and disadvantages of ridge tillage. DeBoria Janifer introduces. (295)

COMMENTS ON
RECORDKEEPING?

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is asking for public comment on a proposal that would reduce Federal recordkeeping requirements significantly on grain merchandisers and elevator owners and operators. The proposal would eliminate complex preparation and maintenance requirements that are currently in place. It would also permit the industry to retain records for 2 years instead of 3. Another provision would formally prohibit the unauthorized disclosure of business information. Send comments by Mar. 11 to Lewis Lebakken, Jr., Information Resources Management Branch, USDA, room 0667-South, Washington, D.C. 20250. Or call: (202) 382-1738.

INCREASED RATES
FOR INSPECTION

Effective Jan. 6, the U.S. Department of Agriculture increased its overtime inspection rates charged to meat and poultry plants from \$21 to \$21.72 per hour. In addition, the hourly rate for voluntary inspection and certification services increased from \$17.96 to \$18.60, and the charge for laboratory work from \$34.68 to \$35.92.

MORE EMERGENCY
LOANS

Twenty-eight counties in 3 states were named by Sec'y of Agriculture John Block as eligible for emergency loans due to weather. In Idaho, one primary county and 6 contiguous counties. In Massachusetts, one primary county and 5 contiguous. In Michigan, 12 primary counties and 4 contiguous. Farmers have eight months in which to apply for loans to cover part of their actual losses.

1985 WOOL &
MOHAIR SUPPORT
PRICES

Support prices for wool and mohair for 1985 marketings are \$1.73 per pound for shorn wool and \$4.65 per pound for mohair, according to Sec'y of Agriculture John Block. For 1984, the support prices were \$1.65 for wool and \$5.169 for mohair. Pulled wool will continue to be supported at a level comparable to the support price for shorn wool through payments on unshorn lambs.

OFF MIKE

The USDA Office of Information will be holding a Journalists' Conference this year. The dates are March 6-8. The tentative schedule is for March 6 to be devoted to presentations from USDA officials about key elements of the Farm Bill and about farm legislation philosophy in general; March 7 will be spent on the Hill with presentations by key legislators and (hopefully) attendance at a Farm Bill hearing; and March 8 will be a "follow-through" day for journalists to pick up on stories they want to do with USDA officials and Members of Congress. We plan to send out invitations to attend, but we may not cover everyone. So, if you're interested in attending, let me know. That way you'll be sure to be included...I just ran across some notes I made during the NAFB meeting in Kansas City, which in turn got me to thinking back to that meeting and how much I had enjoyed it. The new NAFB president, Johnnie Hood (KPTV/So. Farm Net, Raleigh, NC) and his program crew should be right proud of the fine job they did. Now I'm looking forward to the regional meetings, which will be here before we know it...plus the summer meeting here in D.C. We'll be talking about all those events later...We've received a number of requests for the new Yearbook of Agriculture (there's a free copy for you if you want one), and several of the requestees gave us some interesting news along with their request...Bob Bosold (WAXX, Eau Claire, WI) had this news with his request. He says the December 1984 issue of National Geographic has an article on genetics. And, on page 835, Wisconsin farm broadcaster Herb Boyer (WTMB, Tomah, WI) is pictured with his tape recorder gathering information...Klem Walters dropped us a note to say he is now with WRNY/WUUU-FM in Rome, NY. He had been at WRUN in Utica, NY...Last week we mentioned that Doug Thomas would be leaving the Southern States Network in Baton Rouge, LA, to work in the Federal Land Bank in Wichita, KS. Now Doug reports he will be staying at Southern States Net after all...Sorry, no pork belly jokes this week. No room. Isn't that a shame?

FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

AGRICULTURE USA #1441...(Weekly 13½ min documentary) Gary Crawford talks with Secretary of Agriculture John Block about the farm problems in 1984 and the Outlook for Agriculture in 1985.

AGRITAPE/FARM PROGRAM REPORT #1430...(Weekly reel of news features) USDA news highlights; Outlook '85; Farm Bill '85; Good news for poultry producers; ASCS enters the computer age.

CONSUMER TIME #924...(Weekly reel of five 2½-3 min features) Feeding wild animals; Heel, sit and stay; Sheep herding with dogs; Keeping the house warm; Light, white and cold.

USDA RADIO NEWS SERVICE...Thurs, Jan. 17, Milk production report; Tues, Jan. 22, Weekly weather and crop report; Catfish report; Fri, Jan. 25, Annual crop production report. Dial the USDA National News Lines 202/488-8358 or 8359. All material changed at 5 p.m. EST each working day.


JAMES L. JOHNSON, Chief
Radio-Television Division